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To LINCOLN REPUBLICANS

On the Anniversary
of the Birthday of

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

February 12, 1900.

We can only wisely guide our course for the future, by careful study of the landmarks of the past.

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EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS AND ADDRESSES

BY

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

Taken from THE COMPLETE WORKS OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN, edited by J. G. NICOLAY and JOHN HAY.

Lincoln in Debate with Douglas, Oct. 16, 1854,
(Vol. I. p. 195).

“— — No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent.

— — This is the leading principle, the sheet anchor of American republicanism.”

Letter to H. L. Pierce, et al., April 6, 1859,
(Vol. I, p. 532).

“— — But, soberly, it is now no child's play to save the principles of Jefferson from total overthrow in this nation.

— — The principles of Jefferson are the definitions and axioms of free society ; and yet they are denied and evaded, with no small show of success. One dashinglly calls them ‘glittering generalities.’ Another bluntly calls them ‘self evident lies.’ Others insidiously argue that they apply to ‘superior races.’ These expressions, differing in form, are identical in object and effect, the sup-

planting the principles of free government, and restoring those of class, caste, and legitimacy. They would delight a convocation of crowned heads plotting against the people. They are the vanguard, the miners and sappers of returning despotism. We must repulse them, or they will subjugate us. This is a world of compensation and he who would be no slave must consent to have no slave. *Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not themselves, and, under a just God, cannot long retain it.*

All honor to Jefferson, to the man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so to embalm it there that today, and in all coming days, it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling block to the very harbingers of re-appearing tyranny and oppression."

From speech at Chicago, July 10, 1858, (Vol. I, p. 259).

"Those, arguments that are made, that the inferior race are to be treated with as much allowance as they are capable of enjoying; that as much is to be done for them as their condition will allow. What are these arguments? They are the arguments that kings have made for the enslaving of the people in all ages of the world. You will find that all

the arguments of king-craft were always of this class; they always bestrode the necks of the people,—not that they wanted to do it, but because the people were better off for being ridden. — — Turn in whatever way you will—whether it come from the mouth of a king, as an excuse for enslaving the people of his country, or from the mouth of men of one race as a reason for enslaving the men of another race, it is all the same old serpent.”

From Address at Dedication of National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Nov. 19, 1863, (Vol. II, p. 439).

“It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us,—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

Lincoln's Views of Clergymen who Overlooked the Golden Rule, found expression in the Letter to Rev. Dr. Ide, et al., May 30, 1864, (Vol. II, p. 526).

“When — — professedly holy men — — met in the semblance of prayer and devotion, and, in the name of Him who said ‘As

ye would all men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them,' appealed to the Christian world to aid them in doing to a whole race of men as they would have no man do unto themselves; to my thinking they contemned and insulted God and his church far more than did Satan when he tempted the Saviour with the kingdoms of the earth. The Devil's attempt was no more false, and far less hypocritical."

At this time, when the prerogative of the chief executive is stretched beyond any precedent it is well to read what Lincoln looked upon as a wise restraint. In a letter to W. H Herndon (Feb. 15, 1848, Vol. I, p. 112), he wrote :

"The provision of the constitution giving the war-making power to Congress was dictated, as I understand it, by the following reasons: Kings had always been involving and impoverishing their people in wars, pretending generally, if not always, that the good of the people was the object. This our convention understood to be the most oppressive of all kingly oppressions, and they resolved to so frame the constitution that no one man should hold the power of bringing this oppression upon us."

Lincoln was a consistent opponent of the Mexican War while in Congress; that war which, backed by the slave power, was

regarded by its opponents as both unwise and wicked. The results of that war of aggression could have been but faintly foreseen by Lincoln.

His attitude toward it brought at first a popular condemnation that prevented his return to Congress. But the war, although it brought to the nation a large accession of contiguous and sparsely settled territory, did not fail to bring its own punishment in the expansion of slavery, giving that institution a new strength, which possibly led to, and certainly greatly prolonged the civil war, which, under the guidance of Lincoln, dealt the slave power its death blow in our country.

Speech in House of Representatives, Jan. 12, 1848,
(Vol. I, p. 106).

“I more than suspect already that he is deeply conscious of being in the wrong; that he (President Polk) feels the blood of this war, like the blood Abel, is crying to Heaven against him; that originally having some strong motive—what, I will not now stop to give my opinion concerning—to involve the two countries in a war, and trusting to escape scrutiny by fixing the public gaze upon the exceeding brightness of military glory—that attractive rainbow that rises in showers of blood—he plunged into it, and has swept on and on till, disappointed in his cal-

culatation of the ease with which Mexico might be subdued, he now finds himself he knows not where. How like the half insane mumblings of a fever dream is the whole war part of his late message! -- As I have said before, he knows not where he is. He is a bewildered, confounded, and miserably perplexed man. God grant he may be able to show there is not something about his conscience more painful than all his mental perplexity."

Mr. Lincoln had views on "aggresssion" at the time of the Mexican war which he expressed in a letter to Rev. J. M. Peck, May 21, 1848, (Vol. I, p. 122). After stating certain facts relating to the manner of beginning the war, he says:

"If you admit these as facts, then I shall be obliged for a reference to any law of language, law of states -- law of religions, any law, human or divine in which an authority can be found for saying these facts constitute 'no aggression.' -- Then I ask is the precept 'Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them' obsolete? of no force? of no application?"

"I speak not of forcible annexation, for that cannot be thought of. That, by our code of morals would be criminal aggression."--From message of President McKinley, April 11, 1898.